



May 28, 2004

Highlights of 2004 Proposed Listing Determinations for 27 ESUs of Pacific Salmon and Steelhead

Today's Action

Today, Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., (U.S. Navy, ret.), Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and D. Robert Lohn, Northwest Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries announced the release of a new hatchery policy, status reviews and proposed listing determinations for 27 populations (called "evolutionary significant units" (ESUs)) of Pacific salmon and steelhead.

Background

Beginning in the early 1990's, NOAA Fisheries listed 26 ESUs of salmon and steelhead as either threatened or endangered in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and California. In September 2001, an Oregon federal district court held that NOAA Fisheries improperly failed to account for hatchery populations in its ESA listings. In February 2004, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals denied a petition for appeal of the *Alsea* decision.

The listing determinations and status reviews are based upon a report produced in early 2003 by NOAA Fisheries' Biological Review Team detailing the biological status of naturally spawning stocks, as well as its assessment of the effects of hatchery programs on ESU viability and conclusions from the Artificial Propagation Evaluation Workshop held in April 2004.

Highlights of Selected Status Reviews and Proposed Listing Determinations

- *2 ESU Improvements from Endangered to Threatened.* The status report proposes 23 ESUs warrant listing as "threatened." Previously, NOAA Fisheries had 20 ESUs listed as threatened. Following the reviews, 2 previously "endangered" listings (Sacramento River winter-run chinook and Upper Columbia River steelhead) improved to "threatened" status. In addition, one ESU that had been a "candidate" for listing, Lower Columbia coho, was proposed as a "threatened" status, and one that had previously been listed as threatened, Oregon Coast coho, was proposed to be re-listed as "threatened."
- *1 Listing Change from Threatened to Endangered.* The report proposes that 4 ESUs (Snake River sockeye, Upper Columbia River spring chinook, Southern California steelhead and Central California Coast coho) warrant listing as "endangered" species. Previously, NOAA Fisheries had 5 ESUs listed as endangered. The Central Coast coho status was a change from "threatened" to "endangered." The State of California also proposed listing of this ESU under the state ESA.
- *Puget Sound Chinook ESU.* While the status of this ESU is proposed by NOAA Fisheries to remain threatened, the status report recognizes "significant and positive actions to address limiting factors" of Puget Sound chinook, including: implementation of the Washington Forests and Fish

agreement for timber practices, the Washington Department of Transportation's Routine Road Maintenance plan implemented by the Tri-County governments, the Puget Sound hatchery reform project, and ongoing habitat and harvest management programs. The report also expresses NOAA Fisheries' support for the Shared Strategy recovery planning process, and encourages it to continue to meet necessary commitments to address limiting factors of the ESU.

- *Snake River Fall Chinook ESU.* While the status of this ESU is proposed by NOAA Fisheries to remain threatened, the report notes that "actions under the 2000 Federal Columbia River Power System biological opinion and improvements in hatchery practices have provided some encouraging signs in addressing the ESU's factors for decline." The report also acknowledges that hatchery stocks from the Lyons Ferry hatchery have contributed to encouraging increases in return fall chinook salmon in recent years.
- *Oregon Coast Coho ESU.* The status of this ESU is proposed by NOAA Fisheries to remain threatened. However, the report recognizes the "significant contributions" the Oregon Plan has made or encouraged toward conserving salmon and steelhead populations, and states that if, upon completion of the State of Oregon's scientific review of problems causing the previous decline and also an analysis showing that the Oregon Plan and/or other conservation efforts substantially mitigate ESU extinction risk, NOAA Fisheries will re-open the listing determination to consider the best and most recent scientific and commercial data available.
- *Middle Columbia River Steelhead ESU.* The status of this ESU is proposed by NOAA Fisheries to remain threatened. However, the report recognizes dramatic increases in abundance throughout the ESU, positive short-term productivity in all production areas. The report states that NOAA Fisheries views this ESU as "an exceptional opportunity to secure specific conservation measures that would help ensure the ESU's viability over the long term and likely bring the ESU to the point where ESA protections are no longer necessary," and that in the event that certain actions are undertaken to address limiting factors prior to the final listing determination, NOAA Fisheries will re-open the listing determination for this ESU.
- *Upper Columbia River Steelhead ESU.* The status of this ESU is proposed by NOAA Fisheries to have improved from endangered to threatened. The report notes that NOAA Fisheries' assessment of the effects of hatcheries on the ESU's extinction risk concluded that hatchery programs collectively mitigate the immediacy of extinction risk in-total in the short term, but the contribution in the foreseeable future is uncertain.
- *Sacramento Winter Run Chinook ESU.* The status of this ESU is proposed by NOAA Fisheries to have improved from endangered to threatened. The report notes "harvest and habitat conservation efforts have substantially benefited the ESU's abundance and productivity over the past decade," including: changes in Central Valley Project and State Water Project operations and other actions undertaken pursuant to implementation of the Central Valley Project biological opinion; changes in ocean harvest pursuant to the ocean harvest biological opinion and habitat restoration efforts as a result of the CALFED program and other habitat restoration projects.

More information about the status reviews and listing determinations of each of the 27 listings of Pacific salmon and steelhead will become available on May 28, 2004 at: <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>.